sea, together with the Buddhist sutras I've been writing for every one of the lost Kaiten pilots for many years now.

We thought it probably was the spirits of our dead comrades that stopped our engine. Kept us from leaving. They were probably telling us, "Don't rush back home. Stay with us awhile." So many fine young men, wonderful men, were killed.

Human Torpedo

KŌZU NAOJI

"I didn't die in a Kaiten. I lived forty-five years after that. Still, up to today I don't know why I was born. Yet here I am alive. Writing my book may be it. I consider it part of my will. But they tell me, 'That kind of book won't sell anymore.' Yet, I feel I must do something, so I keep writing. My heart goes out to those who died so young. I still feel their deaths had some meaning. They didn't die from illness. Each died with a clear purpose in mind."

He speaks softly, with little outward show of emotion.

At the time of Pearl Harbor, I was only nearing the end of my second year at the Higher School. The war was being fought by adults. Students were still deferred from the draft. If everything had gone normally, I wouldn't have graduated from university until March 1946. I was sure I was absolutely safe, and I acted that way.

Then they changed the rules. The first thing they did was reduce the period of study. That happened just before the outbreak of the Pacific War. I was forced into university after two years and six months instead of the normal three years. Then in the fall of 1943, student exemptions were canceled. The day after the announcement was made I went to my campus. Everything was in an uproar at Tokyo Imperial University. Nobody knew anything. Some said, "They'll never take students from the Imperial universities. Not Tōdai and Kyōdai [Tokyo Imperial University and Kyoto Imperial University]!" But as things turned out, that couldn't have been further from the truth. In October I was pulled into the military. Forced in.

I was skinny. I didn't think I'd be able to take it if they got hold of me. I was sure I just wasn't cut out to be a soldier or a sailor. Officers from the army had been attached to our schools since my middle-school days. They were swaggering bastards. I couldn't stand them. The navy looked better from the outside, and I did find myself in the navy, a

second-class seaman, the lowest thing it was possible to be. I took the officers' examination. They felt that those of us from the Law Faculty of Tokyo Imperial University had the minimal qualifications to sit for the paymaster exam in the Imperial Japanese Navy.

What happened was that with one exception, everyone in my group who wore eyeglasses became paymasters. In those days, seventy percent of Tōdai students wore specs. Then they called out the names of all those who'd been assigned to gunnery, navigation, torpedo school, but they didn't call mine. Next they announced the names of those who had been selected for service as "defense-specialty reserve students." Mine was the only name called. "Defense-specialty?" At that time I didn't know we were losing battles one after another. I thought, "I don't have to attack! That's great. Things have really worked out well." But in the kind of war they were really fighting, "defense specialist" was a black joke.

I was sent to the antisubmarine-warfare school in February 1944 and was stuck there until the end of October. I was fed up with school by then. "What am I doing in this place?" I asked myself that when they started calling for volunteers who were "full of energy," who were "willing to take on a dangerous job," and "willing to board a special weapon" that would "reverse the tide of the war at once." Why not? It's got to be better than this. I applied for it carelessly. Almost ninety percent of us volunteered.

Since they only wanted forty of us, though, I was pretty sure I wouldn't be one of those selected. They called us out a second time, a third time. Each time some of our classmates hadn't been chosen. In the end, we began dimly to grasp the criteria used in selection. Eldest sons were removed from the list. You had to be a second son or lower. Even then, if you had an older brother at the front, they took you off the list. If you were the third son, but neither of your elder brothers had a chance to survive, you were dropped. I was a second son. My younger brother was still in middle school. My eldest brother was an officer in the navy. I suppose they thought my younger brother had a good chance to survive, so I was picked. But I never imagined I'd be going to a place from which I'd have absolutely no chance to return alive.

So forty of us entered the Kaiten Corps. We arrived at Kawatana on the twenty-fourth of October. There weren't any weapons for us yet. They couldn't even tell us what these secret weapons would be. Highly classified, was what they said. At Kawatana they had these plywood motorboats —they called them Shinyō, "Ocean Shakers." We charged into "the enemy" on those! You fixed the helm three hundred meters before impact, locking the rudder in place. A hand-engaged lever controlled acceleration. Once you let go of it, it didn't automatically let up like the

pedal of a car. Then you jumped into the sea. The unmanned boat would then plunge into a target representing the enemy. They weren't telling you you had to die. We *were* wearing life jackets, but you had to wonder if it was possible to survive this kind of attack. I thought it was damned outrageous, but they told us not to worry, the Kaiten would be a much superior weapon. How could I have imagined they wouldn't include any escape system at all?

As we were beginning our training, the first announcement of Kamikaze attacks was made. I think that was October 29. Reading the news of the "Divine Wind" Special Attack Corps in the newspapers—planes crashing into the enemy ships—I was bowled over. Even then, I didn't grasp the true nature of the Kamikaze. I still wondered, "What are they going to do if they parachute down in the middle of the enemy fleet?" Yet there I was. We couldn't share our doubts with each other. We were all drawn from different universities. If I had expressed my disquiet, my university could have been disgraced. I had to keep my own counsel.

Today, I know they deceived us! I know it with all my heart! But then—and for many years afterward—I thought it must have been me. I thought I misheard them. We only received explanations orally. I thought I missed what they said. Even a decade ago, I had some doubts. But in 1987 a document turned up. When I saw that for the first time, I knew. The document had been drafted August 20 and issued August 31, 1944, by the Chief of the Personnel Bureau and the Chief of Education of the Imperial Navy. It bears the seals of Navy Minister Yonai Mitsumasa and his chief subordinates. It sets forth instructions for recruiting and training reserve student officers to fill positions in special-weapons units, and outlines how to select and train them. It expressly forbids touching on the weapon's capabilities or its use. Those doing the soliciting were instructed to say only that if you attack in the weapon you'll kill the enemy without fail. They were told to state that some danger was involved. But that was all. Seeing those words in print, I knew they'd misled us deliberately.

As we were waiting to move to our final staging base at Hikari we received a postcard from one of our comrades who'd gone there ahead of us. On it was "Say hello to Kudō." That was our code phrase for "Escape is impossible." Until that moment we had had no confirmation that the Kaiten was a self-exploding weapon which gave you no chance to escape death.

We'd heard rumors, but I didn't actually see one until I got to Hikari. The body was painted flat black. It overwhelmed a man. A small sail and a tiny periscope located at its center seemed to disturb the harmony of

the whole. The rear third was a Type-93 torpedo. A maintenance officer described it to us dispassionately, "The total length is fourteen point five meters. Diameter, one meter. The crew is one man. Explosive charge one point six metric tons. Navigation range seventy-eight thousand meters. Maximum speed thirty knots."

I was supposed to be ready for this, but the shock nearly knocked me down. In the summer of 1946, I recorded my thoughts at that moment: "At last we saw the weapon we would ourselves board. I sensed something larger than the power of a human being glowering down at me. I lost my reason and my emotions. I was dumbfounded. I felt that I had myself turned into something no longer human." I couldn't really tell, at that time, whether what I sensed was higher or lower than a human being, but I felt I now knew why we human beings could no longer control our own destiny.

If you worked at it carefully, you could get out of the Kaiten Corps. All you had to do was fail to operate the Kaiten properly and do the same thing again on your second try. You'd be shouted at: "You stupid bastard! We won't let a dumb shit like you operate a Kaiten!" and they'd take you off the list. But I never thought of escaping myself; that would only have meant somebody else dying in my place. Even if the whole unit had to be replaced, they'd have found others. It was that kind of system. I couldn't bear the idea of sacrificing someone else by quitting. I knew if I did, I'd regret it for the rest of my life, even if I never knew his name. I hated the thought that I'd fail and they'd say, "Those reserve students are no good!" I couldn't do that to the others. I *wanted* to navigate well. Like they say in Chinese, *"Mei fa"*—"It can't be helped." I was resigned to it.

It was horrible to contemplate death in a Kaiten. Many young men charged into the enemy and died during the war—in Kamikaze planes, in Ōka manned rocket bombs, in Shinyō boats. If everything went well for them, and the battleship that was their target was close, looming in front of them, at least they could count the seconds to impact: "Three, two, one . . . ." Then, as long as they kept their eyes open, they'd know the moment of their deaths!

But the Kaiten wasn't like that. You're underwater. You can't look out. You've already determined your course, peering through the periscope. "The enemy position in one minute and thirty seconds will be this. I set my angle of attack at this." You submerge. You run full speed at the estimated enemy position. From the moment you commence your attack, you see nothing. You have a stopwatch. You know how much of the one minute and thirty seconds has elapsed. But you may have made an error in measurement. You keep thinking, "Now. Now. Now!" But you never know when that moment will come. "Time's elapsed," you realize. "I

missed the target." You come to the surface. You search again for the enemy. You realize you passed astern. Once more you set your course. But again, you don't know the moment of your death. You may die ahead of schedule. You don't even know that. I can't imagine a crueler weapon. Yet I can't ask anyone how they felt at that moment, because no one who experienced it came back alive.

There were men who returned as many as four times from missions, but in every case it was because their Kaiten was unable to launch from the host submarine, or no enemy was found. Nobody who was launched from a submarine ever returned, so we don't know their feelings. At that final moment a cold sweat must have broken out. Or maybe they went mad. But there are no witnesses. Nothing could be crueler than that. Nothing. Who am I to say that a Kaiten pilot could remain sane at a moment like that? In the book I've been writing about the Kaitens, I couldn't put these thoughts in it. With the families of those who'd perished in mind, I just couldn't say that aloud. Even after forty years, I just couldn't write it. Such a hardhearted weapon! So callous. I have here a list of the dead. All of them. I still wonder how they felt at the moment of death.

In reality, hardly any ever hit an enemy ship. Those who returned following Kaiten launches say they heard the sounds of explosions. They say they heard them just before the mother ship broke off to return home or seek new targets. That must mean they self-detonated. When the Kaitens are released to begin their attacks, the targeted ships are far, far away. The pilots try desperately to overtake them. They fail. They're alone in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. It's possible to open the hatch and climb out. But what would you do in the middle of the Pacific? I believe they thought it better just to blow themselves up. At least I'll die in one blast, they may have thought. That, I don't know. Nobody knows.

The verification of all American ships lost during the war has long been completed. According to their records, Kaitens claimed just three ships sunk or heavily damaged. One at the Ulithi Atoll was hit, two others in the open Pacific. But I'm sure there must be ships not registered by the American military—drafted ships, Australian ships, British ships, others for which records are not complete. Some might have been lost to Kaitens, so I cannot speak with absolute confidence. Still I can't help thinking, with the exception of those three pilots who hit, how must the others have felt?

One hundred and six Kaiten pilots lost. This includes seventeen killed in practice or in accidents. With the three hits, that means eighty-six remain to be accounted for. Two were lost during an air raid on their base. Seven were killed on ships transporting them, others together with

their mother ships. The total number of men who were actually able to carry out attacks was very small, I tell you, very small.

There was a plan to build one thousand Kaitens over several months, but in reality only four hundred to four hundred fifty were produced. They assembled one thousand three hundred sixty-four pilot candidates, but manufacturing fell behind. It wasn't that they trained many at once and then selected the best. There weren't enough training boats or instructors for that. You got about four practice runs in basic training. If you survived without accidents, then you were appointed to an attack unit. There you practiced some more and then went on your mission. I first actually boarded a Kaiten in May. It was an "accompanied ride" with an apprentice instructor. How long I'd waited for that moment!

I don't know who selected the attack unit. There were usually five or six men in a unit. When you were selected, the commander of the unit called you up and informed the others, "You will serve in my unit." From that moment on, they considered themselves as one.

One hundred and twenty-one men who had graduated from the naval academy were assigned to our unit. Two hundred and thirty of us were reserve students. We also wore the single cherry blossom on our collars, but the naval academy graduates used to tell us, "You got your cherry blossoms from Roosevelt. You became ensigns after only a year. We spent years earning ours." We thought, "Hell, it wasn't us who wanted these things."

They beat us up regularly. I don't think they used such methods at the naval academy, but with us they didn't hold back. In the navy, they put almost superstitious faith in the belief that brutality and physical punishment made better sailors. Normally, though, officers didn't touch the men under them, but the regular officers in the Kaiten Unit must have believed it was the best way to handle these irregular upstarts, these former students, so weak in spirit. They never let up. "Academy this, academy that"—we didn't give a damn how they did it at the naval academy, but at the same time we thought, "We'll show 'em, they'll see what we can do." I guess that's what they wanted us to feel.

The Kaiten Corps was formed on September 1, 1944, on Ōtsushima. The first Kaiten attacks were made in November and December. The fervor was intense. The Hikari Base opened December 1, and the first attack force left there February 20. Everyone was caught up in a mad rush. By the time the second and third attack forces departed, the frenzy had died down and a sort of normality had taken hold.

Dispatching the attack force was a grand show, let me tell you. It was so thrilling. Probably every man who sent off his fellows was himself carried away with excitement. It was almost like the departure for battle

of a great general and his samurai warriors in the feudal age—very different from the pushbutton war of today. There was a sense of man-to-man combat in it. In the army, war had already become a clash of power against power, a battle of tank divisions, or mass war like the Imphal attack in Burma. The individual was obliterated in a war like that. Even air war was no longer the clash of lone warriors. But the Kaiten was still an individual affair. An elaborate ritual was staged, a grand send-off.

"Tomorrow, I'll be the one sent off like that," we thought. "There's no distance separating me, the new arrival, from those departing today and those who have already gone and are now dead." I could send them off without feeling guilt, but how did these paymasters or the superior commanders who were not themselves going to die feel? I can't tell you that. I never thought the Emperor could act on his own. I didn't see myself throwing my life away for him, nor for the government either, nor for the nation. I saw myself dying to defend my parents, my brothers and sisters. For them I must die, I thought.

Bride of a Kamikaze

ARAKI SHIGEKO

We meet by the statue of the Goddess of Mercy dedicated to the Special Attack Forces, the Tokkō Kannon, at Setagaya Fudō Temple in a quiet residential neighborhood of Tokyo. A gathering is held there the eighteenth of every month. Wearing a green dress with a large floral pattern, she looked very young and moved gracefully, as she changed the water for the flowers, lit incense, and arranged objects on the altar. She seems like a daughter, or younger sister of a man who had been a Tokkō, until she is introduced as "the widow of Flight Lieutenant Araki."

At her home, where we later talk, there are many photographs of family members—on walls, on bureaus, and the tops of cabinets. Off by itself in a corner is a photograph of a young man in a flight jacket.

He passed away in 1945. Forty-five years have gone by, and yet strangely the face of the man who died in action remains that of a twenty-one-year-old. My second husband died at fifty-seven with an old man's face, while his is almost like my son's. I guess that's why the yearning gets stronger year by year. It's like the love of a mother cherishing her son's memory.

I hadn't planned to get married so young. We were brought up as